

## Hawk & Swan Perceptions of Space & Boundaries *en route* to Natural Inclusionalty

*By Alan Rayner*

I painted this picture in 1974, shortly after reading 'The Journey to the East' by Hermann Hesse. Over the years since then it has come to symbolise, in what are to me surprising and remarkable ways, my own return journey to awareness of the fundamental evolutionary principle of 'natural inclusion' as 'the dynamic inclusion of space in form and form in space'. I will try to explain this symbolism – which at the time was 'unconscious' – in a few moments. But first, I would like to ask you what comes into your mind as you view the painting?



\*\*\*PAUSE\*\*\*

Ostensibly, what is depicted is a narrow waterway between two rock faces, leading out into a wide openness of sunlit sea and sky through a bridge formed by two bent over willowy

human female figures meeting head-on. Silhouetted human figures on horseback are descending down the rock faces towards each other. A pair of hawks and a pair of swans are flying towards one another, respectively from left and right sides of the painting. A ray of sunlight hangs down vertically, like a Sword of Damocles, between the heads of the female figures. A rowing boat, with oars crossed and at rest on its left and right flanks passes underneath the veil of leafy hair hanging down from the bridge.

Now, consider the very different world views of hawks and swans with regard to how they may perceive natural space and boundaries.

Hawks are rapaciously fierce, carnivorous predators with binocular vision that enables them to single out prey items from their contextual surroundings. In effect, they are 'objectivistic', 'third person' perceivers, which isolate what they observe from themselves in a detached 'perspective'. Their life depends on acutely focused attention and swift action. They will be predisposed to perceive natural space and boundaries as definitive gaps and barriers between one thing and another.

Swans are protectively fierce herbivores with wide-angled vision from eyes on either side of their heads. In effect they are 'subjective', 'first person' observers, which include themselves centrally within what they observe, and feed from. Their life depends on circumspect attention, which serenely takes in all that is present and happening around them. They will be predisposed to perceive space as endless and boundaries as fuzzy.

Now consider the perceptions of a human being on board the boat, as a bipedal, omnivorous primate with grasping hands and binocular vision, a brain with left and right hemispheres and a receptive, pulsating heart at its centre of blood circulation. Can you imagine how this creature would be predisposed both to combine and separate focused and circumspect attention as a kind of Hawk/Swan first person/third person (i.e. second person) hybrid? [NB I was unaware at the time of making this painting of the complementary analytical and integrative functionalities that have been attributed respectively to left and right brain hemispheres]. Can you imagine also how any tendency to sever the intimate relationship between these functionalities will precipitate opposition and conflict between them? Can you relate this to the many contemporary examples of human antipathy between political opponents, science and art, materialism and spirituality etc?

Now imagine how it would be not only to bridge *between* these perceptions but to journey into the wide openness that encompasses and transcends all three of them as a kind of 'fourth person'. Are you 'getting the picture'. The comprehensive awareness of natural inclusion as

*the mutually inclusive, co-creative, receptive-responsive relationship between intangible spatial stillness and energetic motion in the being, becoming and evolutionary diversification of all material bodies, including our own*

## Further Reading

Rayner, A. (2022) Combining Focus and Circumspection: An Education in Natural Inclusion. In *Transformative Education for Regeneration and Wellbeing* (J.J. McIntyre-Mills, Y. Corcoran-Nantes, eds.) pp. 413 – 440. Springer.

Rayner, A. (2022) The  $\Upsilon$  - Principle of Natural Inclusion: From Competition Versus Co-operation to Heartfelt Relay. As above pp. 441 – 447.